

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1801

April 22, 2010

**Water Caucus Co-Chair, Representative John Linder (R-GA),
Recognizes Earth Day, and Urges Members of Congress to be
Thinking About Our Water Resources**

Dear Colleague:

Humankind depends on clean, fresh water for survival, yet 97 percent of the earth's water is saline. Two percent of the earth's fresh water is frozen in glaciers and the polar ice caps. The remaining one percent constitutes the fresh water available for human consumption.

Projections of future population growth and the resulting demand for increased water resources forecast imminent water shortages. According to a Johns Hopkins School of Public Health study, by 2025, 48 countries will face chronic water shortages, and humankind could require over 90 percent of the earth's available fresh water, leaving less than ten percent of that number for the earth's plants and animals. The United States' water resources will be appropriated to their fullest capacity in the next several decades, and current water supplies will prove inadequate.

We have limited the amount of water allowed to circulate through our toilets. We have restricted outdoor water usage to specific days and times. Given these current restrictions, we must begin a coordinated effort to prepare for future challenges before more draconian measures may be needed.

The traditional methods of capturing and distributing fresh water within the United States will not be sufficient 20 years from now. Trillions of gallons of water fall on each one of our nation's states each year, yet our lakes are growing dangerously low, our citizens are subject to stringent water restrictions, and our aquifers are being pumped dry.

Why? One of the reasons is because we do not effectively capture rainfall before it evaporates or runs off into the ocean. We must research new technologies, such as aquifer recharge, desalination, efficient irrigation techniques, recycled wastewater, wetlands creation, and more in order to capture and store water for future usage.

Another reason why we are faced with critically low water levels is because older cities are losing approximately 20 percent of the water carried through their pipes each day. New York City loses 36 million gallons per day to leaks in the Delaware Aqueduct, while Philadelphia loses 85 million gallons per day to leaks in city pipes. According to experts at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), by 2016, over half of our nation's pipes will be in very poor condition, if not completely unusable. This is truly devastating. If we don't get ahead of this issue soon, those residing in the big cities may one day turn on their faucets and discover that no water emerges.

Water issues have been on my mind for years. To be quite honest, I don't know exactly how we are going to fix these problems, but I do know where we should start. What we need to do is create a

mechanism for water experts to come together to discuss new technologies and possibilities for increasing our water supply. In support of that idea, I introduced legislation in the 107th, 108th, 109th, and 110th Congresses, to create a commission charged with researching and recommending to Congress a comprehensive water strategy to meet 21st century water needs.

My bill, H.R. 135, would create the “21st Century Water Policy Commission” to study all aspects of water management on the Federal, state, local, and private levels and develop recommendations for a comprehensive water policy that: 1) Respects the primary role of states in water rights law; 2) Ensures an adequate supply of fresh water for U.S. citizens over the next 50 years; 3) Does not place increased mandates on state and local governments; 4) Eliminates duplication and conflict among governmental agencies; 5) Considers all available technologies for increasing water supply efficiently, while safeguarding the environment; 6) Recommends means of capturing excess water for future droughts; and 7) Suggests financing options for public works projects.

The Water Caucus plays a key role in advancing these issues, by encouraging dialogue and spreading important information so that we are better able to address our critical needs. I am honored to work with my fellow co-chairs in forwarding these goals.

Earth Day provides us with a timely reminder of the importance of water resources for our country – as well as an opportunity to take stock of the efforts we have made so far and to look for ways to work together to create solutions for tomorrow.

It is time to start thinking boldly and with long-term vision. We have to create a roadmap to get us to the next generation with enough clean water for everyone from the West Coast to the East Coast and beyond, or we will be lost. Based upon the recommendations of the “21st Century Water Policy Commission,” Congress and the President can work together to enact a comprehensive water strategy to prepare for future water shortages. We must no longer be reactive when faced with water emergencies. We must act now to face future emergencies proactively. Providing all Americans with fresh water is not a partisan issue. It is a matter of life and death for the future of our country.

Sincerely,



John Linder
Member of Congress
Founder and Co-Chair of the Water Caucus